

News in 2 minutes

A quick read of today's top headlines:

Experts: CT scans pose risks, need regulation

From long-term cancer risks to radiation overdose mistakes, CT scans pose a growing danger to the American public and need more regulation to improve their safety, imaging experts write in a leading medical journal.

The articles in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine come a week after a story by The Associated Press detailed the overuse of imaging tests and how much the average American's radiation dose has grown in recent years.

CT scans are super-sharp X-rays that have transformed medicine by helping doctors quickly diagnose or rule out injuries and diseases. But they use far more radiation than ordinary X-rays, and too much radiation raises the risk of cancer over time.

Bin Laden hunter on his way back to the U.S.

DENVER — An American on a solo mission to hunt down Osama bin Laden is headed back to the United States, 10 days after authorities found him in the woods of northern Pakistan with a pistol, a sword and night-vision equipment.

Gary Faulkner, who has been detained since June 13, left Pakistan early Wednesday and will arrive in Denver later in the day, his brother Scott Faulkner said.

Scott Faulkner said he spoke to his brother briefly Tuesday, and he reported being treated well in Pakistan. By the excitement in his brother's voice, Scott Faulkner said he thinks his brother came close to finding bin Laden.

Chaos at airport renews tarmac-time debate

NEWARK, N.J. — A hot, dark and miserable four-hour stretch spent by hundreds of travelers parked in a diverted trans-Atlantic plane renewed calls Wednesday to add international travel to a months-old federal rule limiting how long airlines can keep passengers trapped on the tarmac.

All of about 300 passengers marooned late Tuesday and early Wednesday at Bradley International Airport outside Hartford, Conn., finally reached their original destination, New Jersey's Newark Liberty International Airport, by mid-afternoon, piling off buses and describing chaos and desperation in the cabin as temperatures and tempers rose.

Some passengers fell ill from the heat as the London-to-Newark Virgin Atlantic flight lingered on the tarmac, and at least one had to be administered oxygen, said David Cooper, a London resident trying to get to his job at a summer camp. The airline confirmed some travelers needed medical treatment but did not say how many.

Ex-Detroit mayor in legal trouble again

DETROIT — Former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, already in prison for probation violations, was indicted Wednesday on federal fraud and tax charges, accused of a turning a charity into a personal slush fund for cash, travel, yoga, summer camp and even anti-bugging equipment.

The indictment was the latest blow for Kilpatrick, who in May was sent to state prison for at least 14 months for violating probation in a 2008 criminal case tied to sexually explicit text messages and an affair with a top aide.

The indictment said Kilpatrick, 40, created the Civic Fund in 1999 and gained tax-exempt status after declaring that it would be a social-welfare organization to enhance neighborhoods, help youth and improve Detroit's image.

— From wire reports

Engineers uncap broken well



AP PHOTO/PATRICK SEMANSKY

St. Bernard Parish president Craig Taffaro, left, and Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal are seen through a hole in a spreader used to build a man-made sand berm near the Chandeleur Islands off the coast of Louisiana on Wednesday. Jindal is pressuring federal authorities to allow the dredging project to resume in an area that federal authorities say is environmentally sensitive.

By Michael Kunzelman
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Engineers had to completely uncap the broken oil well spewing into the Gulf of Mexico Wednesday after an under-sea robot bumped into machinery being used to collect the spilled fuel. Hundreds of thousands of gallons more poured into the water as crews scrambled to replace a critical component.

The mishap left nothing to stem the flow of oil at its source. A camera recording the well showed huge clouds of black fluid coming out of

the sea floor. It was not clear how long workers would need to replace the cap, which took weeks to install.

Bob Dudley, the managing director of BP who is taking over the spill response, said engineers expected to replace the cap in less than a day.

"It's a disruption, and the crew again did exactly the right thing because they were concerned about safety," he said. "It's a setback, and now we will go back into operation and show how this technology can work."

Without the cap, the only

means of collecting the oil was a ship at the surface that is sucking up oil and burning it.

The problem, yet another in the nine-week effort to stop the gusher, came as thick pools of oil washed up on Pensacola Beach in Florida, and the Obama administration sought to resurrect a six-month moratorium on deepwater drilling.

The current worst-case estimate of what's spewing into the Gulf is about 2.5 million gallons a day. Anywhere from 67 million to 127 million gallons have spilled since the April 20 explosion

on the Deepwater Horizon rig that killed 11 workers and blew out the well 5,000 feet underwater. BP PLC was leasing the rig from owner Transocean Ltd.

When the robot bumped into the equipment just before 10 a.m., gas rose through a vent that carries warm water down to prevent ice-like crystals from forming in the machinery, Coast Guard Adm. Thad Allen said.

Crews were checking to see if the crystals called hydrates had formed before attempting to put the cap back on.

Inmates cash in on tax credit

By Stephen Ohlemacher
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Living in prison didn't stop nearly 1,300 inmates from cashing in on a popular tax break for first-time homebuyers, a government investigator reported Wednesday. Their take: more than \$9 million.

In all, more than 14,100 tax filers wrongly received at least \$26.7 million in tax credits meant to boost the nation's slumping housing markets, said the report by J. Russell George, the Treasury Department's inspector general for tax administration.

A common scam had multiple taxpayers using the sale of a single home, with each claiming the credit. One home was used by 67 tax filers, the report said. In other cases, taxpayers got the credit for sales that happened before the tax break started.

"This is very troubling," George said. "Congress created and modified the homebuyer credit to stimulate the economy and help taxpayers achieve the American dream, not to

line the pockets of wrongdoers."

The Internal Revenue Service says it is taking steps to get the money back. The agency noted that more than 2.6 million taxpayers claimed the tax credit through April — claiming \$18.7 billion in credits — with only a tiny fraction going to prison inmates or other scofflaws.

The tax credit "has played a critical role in stabilizing the hard-hit housing market," Assistant Treasury Secretary Michael Mundaca said in a statement. "These fraudulent claims, which are being pursued to the fullest extent of the law, represent less than half a percent of the credits paid out under this program."

"As with all new and expanded programs, we are constantly working to improve implementation, and the IRS has already begun to take additional steps to prevent fraud in this program," Mundaca added.

The National Association of Realtors says the tax credit has generated 1 million new home sales.

Stem cells cure some forms of blindness

By Alicia Change
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Dozens of people who were blinded or otherwise suffered severe eye damage when they were splashed with caustic chemicals had their sight restored with transplants of their own stem cells — a stunning success for the burgeoning cell-therapy field, Italian researchers reported Wednesday.

"This is a roaring success," said ophthalmologist Dr. Ivan Schwab of the University of California, Davis, who had no role in the study — the longest and largest of its kind.

The treatment worked completely in 82 of 107 eyes and partially in 14 others, with benefits lasting up to a decade so far. One man whose eyes were severely damaged more than 60 years ago now has near-normal vision.

Stem cell transplants offer hope to the thousands of people worldwide every year who suffer chemical burns on their corneas.

The approach would not help people with damage to the optic nerve or macular degeneration, which in-

volves the retina.

Nor would it work in people who are completely blind in both eyes, because doctors need at least some healthy tissue that they can transplant.

In the study, published online by the New England Journal of Medicine, researchers took a small number of stem cells from a patient's healthy eye, multiplied them in the lab and placed them into the burned eye, where they were able to grow new corneal tissue to replace what had been damaged. Since the stem cells are from their own bodies, the patients do not need to take anti-rejection drugs.

Rookie docs may get more oversight

By Lindsey Tanner
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Patients will be told when they're being treated by rookie doctors, who would get shorter shifts and better supervision under proposed work changes for medical residents.

The draft regulations aim to promote patient safety and reduce medical errors by enhancing work conditions for sometimes sleep-deprived junior physicians.

The proposal slightly revises regulations adopted seven years ago and would have the biggest impact on interns — new doctors in their first year of residency training programs in hospitals after graduating from medical school. They would be more closely supervised by experienced doctors and the maximum length of their work shifts would be cut from 24 hours to 16 hours.

Maximum work shifts would remain 24 hours for residents in their second year and beyond. Maximum work weeks would remain at 80 hours for all hospital residents.

All residents and their supervisors also would be required to explain their roles to patients and explain that supervisors are ultimately in charge of their care.

The proposal comes from the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education. Dr. Thomas Nasca, the group's CEO, said the changes are needed to meet the main goals of graduate medical education — assuring patient safety while teaching new doctors professionalism and putting patients' needs above their own.

Residency programs, typically lasting three to seven years, give new doctors on-the-job training in patient care along with expertise in their chosen specialty. The programs often involve notoriously long hours that can lead to sleep deprivation, which research shows can contribute to medical errors.

Violations to the accrediting group's 2003 regulations are common and some groups including the influential Institute of Medicine, have pressed for stricter regulations.



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